

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, St Andrew's, Cobham**

**Zechariah 9.9-12; Romans 7.15-25a; Matthew 11.16-19, 25-end.**

**'Trust in me and I will give you rest'.**

---

If you're like me, perhaps you might have found reading or listening to the news in the last few weeks quite harrowing. In fact, I have avoided doing so as much as I can, because I have found it quite hard, trying to process the rather harsh realities of recent events in the Country.

We have seen yet another change in the political landscape of the Country; we've had the start of negotiations to bring about our separation from our European neighbours.

Both these, carry a certain amount of uncertainty and a feeling of helplessness for some of us. As we enter a new era, both cultural as well as economic, and the fate of the country is left in the hands other people.

We have also seen four terror attacks, the dreadful fire at Grenfell Towers, and their devastating effects that has changed the lives of many families and communities up and down the Country. So many innocent lives lost under such cruel circumstances.

We've seen anger, fear and mistrust manifest itself in our communities; for some of us, there is a niggle at the back of our minds about our safety. I know that I am a little bit more anxious when my children ask to

go to London with their friends. (Ayo's recent sojourn to a music festival meant I did not sleep a wink until I knew he was home safe.)

Closer to home for us, the church is in the middle of a vacancy period and I'm sure like me, you're all wondering who the new Rector might be? Will it be a man or a woman? Will we like him or her? Will there be changes to the Services that I will like? Will I still enjoy coming to St Andrew's?

We continue to pray that God will surely guide the right person to St Andrew's.

These uncertainties are very real for so many of us, and they cause us to worry; little worries, can often lead to bigger worries in our minds. These worries sometimes then settle as fear in our hearts. That is not a happy state to be in; as little by little, it can all have an impact on our health, particularly our spiritual health.

So, how can we learn to overcome our fears? How do we, as true Christians, learn to live our lives without fear, particularly when the burdens of life become overwhelming?

If we look at all our readings today, we see how important it is to put our trust in God (or should that be how joyful it is when we put our trust in God). In that tongue-twisting, passage in Paul's letter to the Romans, we had Paul telling us that when we rely on ourselves, it is perhaps easy for sin to overcome us. But when we put our trust in Christ, we can prevail over the law of sin, and receive the Grace we have in Him.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus gives praise to God and declares Him as the 'Lord of Heaven and Earth'. This means that God, is the overseer of all His creation; He, is in charge of our lives! This should surely be comforting for us all, but sometimes, in the midst of a crisis, or when our troubles overwhelm us, it might seem that God is very far away.

But God has revealed Himself to us through His Son, Jesus Christ, for we have our assurance in Christ. And what does Jesus ask of us in our reading today? He asks us to '**come**' – a simple invitation for us to '**come to Him**', with our heavy burdens, that is, our insecurities, our uncertainties, our worries, whatever they might be. He wants us to bring them all to him.

He wants us to drop **our heavy** burdens and to replace them with **His lighter** yoke. The definition of a yoke is given as a wooden frame usually consisting of a bar, with an oxbow for attaching to the necks of a pair of oxen, mules or other draught animals, so they can be worked as a *team*; used as a verb, yoke, means **to join** or **to unite**.

This means that we have an invitation **to unite** with Christ in obedience, to develop a true relationship with Him and to share our lives with Him – this includes the good times as well as the sad times. So, we learn to put our total trust and faith in Him and in exchange, He walks along with us and our burdens will become lighter. This seems to me like a fair exchange.

How do we do this? We *read* His words, we *pray*, we joyfully *bask* in His presence perhaps when we *fellowship* (or *worship*) together in church,

and we *learn* to **be still** and **listen** for His voice. It is a two-way relationship.

As David reminded us in his sermon last Sunday, we are disciples of Christ and we are to learn from Him. Jesus is at centre of our gospel, and He is revealed to us as the example that we are to follow.

He said, ‘for I am gentle and humble in heart’, and (in me) ‘you will find rest for your souls’. So, we too should come to Him with reverence, humility, and meekness and we have been promised rest from our burdens.

I have had several conversations with a few people about how hard (or easy) it is to trust God. I think, it is quite easy for us to say that we have faith in God or that we trust in God. But, do we truly trust Him with every single aspect of our lives? If we do, why then do we worry and panic at the first sign of trouble?

Remember Paul berating himself for his wrongful **inaction** – doing in weakness, what he should not do, rather than what he knows he should do. We know we should put our complete trust in God, but we so often fail to do it. Instead, we burden ourselves with our fears and insecurities.

(Yet, the ability to admit in times of confusion, that we trust God to guide us through our troubles, is one of the greatest spiritual strengths we can possess).

Jesus's instruction for us, to take His yoke, comes from His love for us, so how hard is it for us to let go of our need to be in control of our lives and simply TRUST in Him?

Jesus's call is a call to **empower** us, for us to come and be a part of God's grace. When we answer His call, we are transformed by the assurance and hope that all will be well. Why? Because we are with the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

In the coming days and months, when those moments of fear arise and we are afraid, let us think of Jesus's invitation and exchange our worries with His **lighter** yoke, and listen for His voice, unite with Him and place our trust in Him fully. He has promised that we will find rest.

Today, I invite you to take a moment to think of some of those issues that weigh heavily on your hearts – they may be worries about coping with family life, worries about your health or the health of your loved ones, the stress of work, job interviews, whether new contracts will be offered or old ones renewed, children's exam results, or if you're simply wondering about 'how you will cope with what tomorrow will bring'. I want you to take a moment to be still and pray, and hand those issues over to our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Merciful Saviour, we say 'yes' to your invitation for us to come to you and we humbly bring before you some of our worries, hopes and desires. We put our trust in you, help us make you the centre of our lives, today and every day. Amen